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ABSTRACT

A descriptive analysis of the socialization techniques and values for aggression of a sample of 188 parent sets from a southern Appalachia county was described. The parents were at a lower class occupation and income level. Data were collected by interviews in the home. The 57 separate items in the mother interview and the 40 items in the father interview covered the same child rearing variables. The major conclusion was that the sample parents did not approve of aggression toward parents but did tend to approve of aggression to peers. The techniques used to bring about these specific behaviors were generally punitive. On the rating of punitive techniques used for misbehavior, mothers scored higher than fathers on all counts. The implications of the findings from this as well as other pertinent studies in the literature were discussed. An 18-item bibliography and additional statistical information were presented.
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Socialization of Aggression in Low Income Rural Appalachian Children

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Abstract

The study presents a descriptive analysis of the socialization techniques and values with respect to aggression of a sample of 188 parent sets from a southern county of Appalachia. The results of the study showed that the parents of the sample did not approve of aggression toward parents but did tend to approve of aggression to peers. The techniques used to bring about these specific behaviors were generally punitive and on the rating of punitive techniques used on a child for misbehaving, mothers scored higher than fathers on all counts. The implications of the findings from this study as well as other pertinent studies in the literature are discussed.

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Socialization of Aggression in Low Income

Rural Appalachian Children¹

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Studies concerning child rearing patterns have been varied and profuse. There have been studies on weaning, toilet training, sex differences, modesty, masturbation, sex play, aggression and a few studies which have attempted to incorporate all of these. Subjects have been taken from the lower class, middle class, Mexican children, rat population and various other species (Sears, Maccoby, Levin, 1957; Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961; Madsen, 1966; Richter, 1954; Feshbach, 1969; Young and Goldman, 1944).

Within the studies of child rearing patterns, aggression is one of the more frequently studied areas. Early publications explained aggression in terms of "need analysis" and offered sympathy to the middleclass for its "feelings of incoherent rage and helplessness which result from (its) chronic suppression of aggressive impulses" (Davis, 1943, p. 614).

Studies following this trend tended to see the lower class as permissive of aggression in their child rearing methods. However, in the 1950's more and more studies began to show opposite findings. Parents of middleclass families appeared to be less restrictive and did not appear to rely on physical punishment as the lower class did.

Lower class incorporates everything from ghetto slums to hillbillies. This study is interested in that segment of the lower class living in rural non-farm Appalachia. Most of the literature

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dealing with this segment of the population presents a stereotyped picture of the lower income Appalachian as an uneducated, uncultured, colloquialism who lives in worse-than-slum conditions, in some God-forsaken hollow in the hills of Appalachia and who has anywhere from ten to twenty kids and dogs in perpetual residence on the falling-down front porch of his falling-down house. However, Weller (1965) and Gazaway (1969) have presented a picture of the mountaineer as an independent, rugged, action-seeker--a pioneer from a closeknit family. These semi-Rousseauian descriptions of the rural poor they observed while living in certain areas of the Appalachian region were generalized to low income Appalachians and as Brown (1967) points out, we have to be very careful in making generalizations to Appalachians. What may hold true for the low income urban family may not hold true for the low income rural family or the low income nonfarm rural family. Though all these families may be classified as low income Appalachians, their respective environments (including occupations, climate, technological potentials, etc.) may be totally different which may lead to very different life styles.

Henry's (1970) descriptive study carried out in Kentucky showed that the overwhelming majority of the mothers interviewed (71%) taught their child to fight back and "take his part if the occasion demanded." Nine out of ten mothers would punish a child for being aggressive toward the parent, "sassing," hitting at the parents, and that type of response. Henry also found in his study that "the responses strongly indicate that mountain parents used punitive discipline" (p. 106). Overwhelmingly, the mothers in the study used whipping as the chief method of punishment. Only four out of the hundred mothers never

spanked. Another method of punishment practiced by the mothers in the study was to deprive the child of privileges for misbehaving. Fathers whipped as the primary method of punishment in over one half of the cases.

With each new study in the child rearing area, some old questions are answered but at the same time new ones crop up to beg further research: how is aggression assessed and is each study talking about the same "aggression?" How do you determine the severity of punishment, the mode of its presentation, its frequency? Just what are the values of the lower class with respect to aggression and do these values generalize from urban lower class to rural nonfarm lower class to agricultural lower class and so forth. More importantly, does aggression generalize from one situation to another, for example, from the family to other institutional areas, and if so what are the implications? This study describes the socialization values and techniques of socialization with respect to aggression of low income rural Appalachians.

Method

Subjects:

The Ss were 188 parent sets of children enrolled in a head start program of a southern county of West Virginia. The parents were at an occupation and income level consistent with lower class standards. Seventy percent of the fathers had not graduated from high school, while seventy percent of the mothers had between a seventh grade education and a high school diploma. Over half of the families in the study had incomes of less than \$5,000 per year with a mean of six children per family.

Procedure:

The interview format used in gathering the data was the same as the Sears (1965) study except that the responses were recorded in writing by the interviewer rather than tape recorded as in the former

study. Questions covered the same child rearing variables. Both mother and father were interviewed in their own homes by female and male interviewers respectively, each interviewer team making from three to sometimes five visits for the mother interview and from two to three visits for the father interviews. The mother interview consisted of 57 separate items with as many as seven probe questions to be used when adequate responses were not given in the open end answer. The father interview consisted of only 40 separate items, although most of the same variables were covered as in the mother interview (Aquizap, 1969).

Results

Parent-Child Relationships:

Means, frequency distributions and correlational analyses were performed on each of seventeen variables dealing with aggression values and techniques used to socialize those values. The means for the aggression variables dealing with peer aggression fell in the category indicating that parents tended to make moderate demands and give moderate amounts of permission for peer aggression. Means on aggression toward parents were moderately high for punishment of aggression and were very low for reward of this behavior. In general, the mean values indicated that parents used punitive techniques to socialize specific aggressive values.

Overtly aggressive parents tended to demand aggression to peers from their children (mother $r=.21$, $p<.01$ and father $r=.25$, $p<.01$). Moderate demands for aggression toward peers was highly correlated with permitting the child to engage in peer aggression (mother $r=.57$, $p<.001$ and father $r=.63$, $p<.001$). However, the variable dealing with the child's expressed aggression to his parents (rated by parents)

was also highly correlated with permission for aggression to parents (mother $r=.48$, $p=.001$ and father $r=.44$, $p=.001$); that is, those parents who did not permit their child to be aggressive toward parents correlated with children who did not show aggression toward parents.

By the same token those parents who did not permit aggression not only did not reward aggression toward parents (mother $r=.24$, $p<.01$ and father $r=.41$, $p<.001$) but they also tended to punish aggression to the parents if it did occur (mother $r=-.47$, $p<.001$ and father $r=-.59$, $p<.001$).

Summarizing, the parents in our sample who were overtly aggressive made moderate demands for peer aggression and permitted peer aggression. But aggression to parents was not an acceptable behavior, and was not socialized.

Parent-Parent Relationships:

By looking at the correlations between mother and father on each of the eight aggression variables we find correlations of the first five variables at the .001 level and the sixth variable at the .01 level. The parents of our sample tended to back each other up on socialization techniques and also tended to be consistent in their requirements of the child. For example, each parent's "demands for peer aggression" also correlates with their respective score for permitting peer aggression and the same consistencies occur with respect to aggression toward parents not being permitted and not being reinforced.

Even though there was a great deal of agreement on the mode of punishment between mothers and fathers, mothers showed consistently higher values on the additional punishment data collected for the study (which tends to concur with findings of Hess and Handel (1956)

and Armentrout (1970). Basically, these data show that

(1) all mothers used some sort of physical punishment on their child if he misbehaved while eight fathers indicated that they never used any sort of physical punishment and six fathers indicated that they never spanked their child.

(2) sixty-eight percent of the mothers indicated that they used threats or spanked their child frequently for misbehaving and thirteen of the mothers indicated that they used an implement for spanking. Fathers showed that only thirty percent used threats or spankings and only six fathers indicated that they ever used an implement for spanking purposes.

(3) fifty-five percent of the mothers and twenty-six percent of the fathers used deprivation as another source of punishment.

Discussion

The studies on child rearing up to now seem to indicate that even though the geographic locale for each sample is different and situations for each family are unique, physical punishment and aggression seem to occur in higher percentages in deprived cultures (whether economically or culturally) and do not occur as frequently in less deprived cultures. That is, most of the studies found that lower class parents are more likely to use physical punishment than middle class parents. Allinsmith's (1954) study found that the middle class parents are more likely to use psychological punishment for misbehavior but also gave considerable psychic rewards for correct behavior while lower class gave concrete rewards, but not often. Another interesting aspect of Allinsmith's study was the fact

that children approved of the method of punishment to which they were subjected; ie., a child from the lower class did not approve of psychological punishment but felt that if a child misbehaved he should be spanked. Although Allinsmith's sample was not drawn from the population of low income rural Appalachians, her findings seem to fit in with Henry's hypothesis that childrearing patterns tend to be perpetuated from generation to generation.

What are the implications of these findings to other institutional areas--especially to the schools? There appear to be two considerations:

- (1) How does the child respond in the school situation when specific aggressive values have been socialized, and
- (2) How does the child respond in the school situation when the techniques used to socialize these values have been basically punitive.

Do we find these children sitting quietly in their seats, working diligently, obeying the teacher instantly and without complaint? Hardly. These are the children who wear labels such as "incorrigible," "disruptive," "hard-to-handle," etc. And for the most part this is what we find. Why should this be the case? The answer, of course, depends on your choice of psychological model. The one which seems to most adequately answer the question is reinforcement theory--more precisely that area of reinforcement theory labelled "modeling".

A child may receive reinforcement if he behaves in a way similar to the behavior of someone else who has received reinforcement (Skinner, 1968). John observes that his parents escape some aversive situation (John's name-calling) by using punishment. The next day at school Dan calls John names. It is highly probable that John will not only punish Dan but will no doubt

subject Dan to a type of punishment very similar to what John himself was subjected to.

Parents teach their children values. The techniques they use to impart these values serve as strategy models for the child. If the child is exposed to punitive techniques at home he will be more likely to use punitive techniques to control other aspects of his environment.

What can the school system do? It can take the "incorrigible," "disruptive," "trouble-maker" and expand the time, energy and resources necessary to provide the child with a more positive model by which to control his environment. Or it can continue to produce "20,000 reported cases of paddlings, some resulting in physical injury (Trotter, 1965)" and thereby perpetuate in the child the very behaviors for which it condemns and punishes him.

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GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN

TABLE 1

VARIABLE		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Age of child in months		69-79	78.1
Sex	Male	85	45.5
	Female	102	54.5
Race	White	92	49.7
	Black	66	35.7
Ordinal position of child	1st	23	12.6
	2nd	35	19.1
	3rd	31	16.9
	4th	21	11.5
	5th	16	8.7
	6th	16	8.7
	7th	18	9.8
	8th	17	7.7
	9th	9	4.9

EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PARENTS

TABLE 2

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
EDUCATION OF HUSBAND		
	8	5.59
0. No education	48	33.57
1. Grades 1-6	26	18.18
2. Grades 7-8	19	13.29
3. Any high school	13	9.09
4. High School Grad.	4	2.80
5. Any college and higher	7	4.90
6. Grade school & sp. ed.	6	4.20
7. Grades 7-8 & sp. ed.	6	4.20
8. Any high school and sp. ed.	6	4.20
9. High school grad. and sp. ed.	143	100.00
EDUCATION OF WIFE		
	2	1.12
0. No education	17	9.55
1. Grades 1-6	55	30.90
2. Grades 7-8	70	39.33
3. Any high school	23	12.92
4. High school grad.	2	1.12
5. Any college	2	1.12
6. Grade school & sp. ed.	0	0.00
7. Grades 7-8 & sp. ed.	1	.56
8. Any high school grad. and sp. ed.	6	3.37
9. High school grad. and sp. ed.	178	100.00

FAMILY INCOME DISTRIBUTION

TABLE 3

INCOME	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
0 - 999	46	24.468
1 - 1,999	10	5.319
2 - 2,999	40	21.277
3 - 4,999	57	30.319
5 - 6,999	19	10.106
7 - 8,999	14	7.447
9 - 9,999	<u>2</u>	<u>1.064</u>
TOTALS	188	100.000

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF THE AGGRESSION VARIABLE

TABLE 4

VARIABLE		MEAN	SD	N	MINIMUM VALUE	MAXIMUM VALUE
1. Overt expression of agg. in the home	(M) (F)	5.514 4.940	1.454 1.531	173 129	1.8 1.8	9.0 9.0
2. Demands for agg. toward peers	(M) (F)	6.007 6.009	1.968 1.900	172 127	1.8 1.8	9.0 9.0
3. Permission for agg. toward peers	(M) (F)	4.700 4.784	1.570 1.549	162 114	1.8 1.8	9.0 9.0
4. Permission for agg. among siblings	(M) (F)	4.378 4.800	1.616 1.533	162 69	1.8 1.8	9.0 9.0
5. Aggression toward parents (reported)		3.528	1.499	175	1.8	7.2
6. Permission for agg. toward parents	(M) (F)	2.579 2.600	1.280 1.395	171 126	1.8 1.8	5.4 9.0
7. Punishment for agg. toward parents	(M) (F)	6.124 5.591	1.316 1.365	97 47	3.6 1.8	9.0 7.2
8. Reward for agg. toward parents	(M) (F)	1.822 1.815	.198 .164	165 121	1.8 1.8	3.6 3.6
9. Aggression anxiety	(M) (F)	4.370 3.954	1.781 1.786	173 127	1.8 1.8	9.0 9.0

M = Mother

F = Father

TABLE 5

CORRELATION OF SEVENTEEN AGGRESSION VARIABLES

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1 Overt expression of agg. (M)	1.00													
2 Overt exp. of aggression (F)	.432 (123) ***	1.00												
3 Demands for agg. to peers (M)	.213 (121) **	.134 (127) **	1.00											
4 Demands for agg. to peers (F)	.174 (162) **	.252 (116) **	.318 (161) ***	1.00										
5 Permission for agg. to peers (M)	.236 (108) **	.249 (114) **	.571 (108) **	.135 (114) ***	1.00									
6 Permission for agg. to peers (F)	.110 (161) *	.241 (116) *	.240 (160) *	.630 (114) ***	.433 (153) ***	1.00								
7 Permission for agg. among siblings (M)	.120 (67) *	-.073 (69) **	.134 (67) **	.012 (69) **	.328 (66) **	.188 (66) ***	1.00							
8 Permission for agg. among siblings (F)	.165 (169) *	.013 (127) **	-.035 (168) ***	.348 (125) *	.302 (158) **	.724 (113) **	.535 (158) ***	1.00						
9 Aggression toward parents	.159 (171) *	.158 (121) **	.256 (170) ***	.189 (119) *	.114 (160) **	.079 (106) **	.141 (159) **	-.094 (65) **	1.00					
10 Permission for agg. to parents (M)	-.037 (120) *	-.102 (125) **	.062 (120) **	.017 (124) **	-.035 (113) **	.031 (112) **	.118 (113) **	-.0123 (68) **	.481 (126) ***	1.00				
11 Permission for agg. to parents (F)	.166 (97) *	.101 (54) **	.112 (97) **	.047 (63) **	.043 (94) *	.175 (57) **	.151 (94) **	.147 (37) **	.442 (94) **	.501 (97) ***	1.00			
12 Punish. for agg. to parents (M)	.100 (42) *	.181 (47) **	.291 (42) **	.189 (47) **	.196 (42) **	.003 (46) **	-.076 (43) **	.009 (24) **	.092 (47) **	-.466 (42) ***	-.251 (47) ***	1.00		
13 Punish. for agg. to parents (F)	-.136 (42) **	.099 (47) **	.071 (42) **	.190 (47) **	-.050 (42) **	-.045 (46) **	-.207 (43) **	-.244 (24) **	.085 (47) **	-.113 (42) **	-.589 (47) ***	.396 (34) **	1.00	

TABLE 2 (Continued)

14 Reward for agg. to parents (M)	(165) -.009	(116) .027	(164) -.068	(114) -.057	(156) -.051	(102) -.035	(153) -.058	(64) .000	(162) .075	(163) .241	(114) .197	(94) -.178	(41) -.032	15
15 Reward for agg. to parents (F)	(115) .118	(121) .244	(115) .063	(120) .057	(109) .044	(108) .033	(108) .063	(66) .043	(120) .109	(113) -.060	(119) .414	(60) .000	(46) -.417	1.00
16 Agg. anx. (M)	(173) -.231	(123) -.183	(172) -.156	(121) -.268	(162) -.160	(108) -.203	(161) -.092	(67) -.351	(169) -.058	(171) .033	(120) -.123	(91) -.139	(42) .203	1.00
17 Agg. anx. (F)	(121) .017	(127) -.210	(121) -.107	(126) -.219	(114) -.038	(113) -.169	(115) -.095	(69) -.036	(25) -.087	(119) -.054	(124) -.067	(64) -.242	(47) -.022	1.13

.05 = *

.01 = **

.001 = ***

Circled numbers indicate N for any variable.

TABLE 5 (Continued)